



Trail Tales



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New Mexico 4-Wheelers

www.nm4w.org

When to Use 4×4 Low Range

By Frank Whiston



One of the most common questions on club runs—especially from guests or newer members—is when to shift into 4×4 low range. Low range isn't just for extreme rock crawling; it's a critical tool for vehicle control, trail preservation, drivetrain longevity, and group safety. Knowing when (and why) to use it makes every run smoother for everyone involved.

What Low Range Actually Does

Engaging 4×4 low range multiplies torque while reducing wheel speed. This allows your vehicle to move slowly and deliberately with far less throttle input. The result is improved traction, better control, and reduced strain on your drivetrain and brakes.

Think of it as **mechanical advantage**: Low range allows the engine to stay in its power band while the wheels move slowly. It isn't about going slower for the sake of it—it's about controlled movement.

Why Low Range Matters for Vehicle Health

Automatic Transmission Protection On steep climbs, using high range in an automatic transmission can cause excessive torque converter slip. When this happens, the engine is working hard while the vehicle speed remains low, generating significant heat inside the transmission. Over time, this heat buildup can degrade transmission fluid and potentially lead to internal damage.

Engaging low range reduces the load on the torque converter by allowing the drivetrain to operate more efficiently at lower speeds. The vehicle climbs more easily, with less throttle, less heat, and far less stress on the transmission—especially on long or sustained climbs.

Improved Engine Cooling and the RPM Misconception Another often-overlooked benefit of low range is cooling efficiency. When traveling slowly in low range, the engine typically operates at a higher RPM than it would in high range at the same ground speed.

Important Note: A higher RPM in low range does **not** mean your engine is working harder. In fact, the engine is under significantly less load because the transfer case gears are doing the "heavy lifting."

Higher engine RPM means the mechanical cooling fan and water pump are moving more air and coolant through the system at a time when there is very little natural airflow from

vehicle movement. In contrast, crawling uphill in high range often results in low engine RPM under heavy load, which can "lug" the engine, reduce airflow through the radiator, and limit cooling effectiveness. Low range keeps temperatures in check by allowing the engine to spin freely and stay cool while maintaining slow, controlled movement.

Situations Where Low Range Is Recommended

1. **Steep Climbs or Descents** Low range provides engine braking on descents, reducing reliance on your brakes and helping prevent sliding or brake fade. On climbs, it delivers steady torque while helping protect automatic transmissions and maintain effective engine cooling.



2. **Technical Terrain** Rock gardens, ledges, deep ruts, off-camber sections, or tight maneuvering areas are all prime candidates for low range. The added control helps you place tires precisely and reduces the need for sudden throttle inputs.



3. **Loose or Slippery Surfaces** Sand, snow, mud, or decomposed granite often benefit from low range—especially when navigating slowly or starting from a stop. It helps maintain momentum without excessive wheel spin.



4. **Slow Group Travel** On club trips, pace matters. Low range allows you to crawl smoothly at group speed without constant braking or clutch slipping (for manual



transmissions). This keeps spacing consistent and reduces driver fatigue.

5. **Towing or Recoveries** If you're assisting with a recovery or moving a stuck vehicle, low range provides the torque and control needed to do so safely and deliberately.



When Low Range Is Not Necessary

Low range isn't intended for higher-speed travel, graded roads, or situations where wheel speed is required (such as certain deep sand runs). Using low range unnecessarily can lead to drivetrain binding or overheating.

When in doubt, ask your trail leader. They'll often call out recommended drivetrain settings for specific sections of the trail.

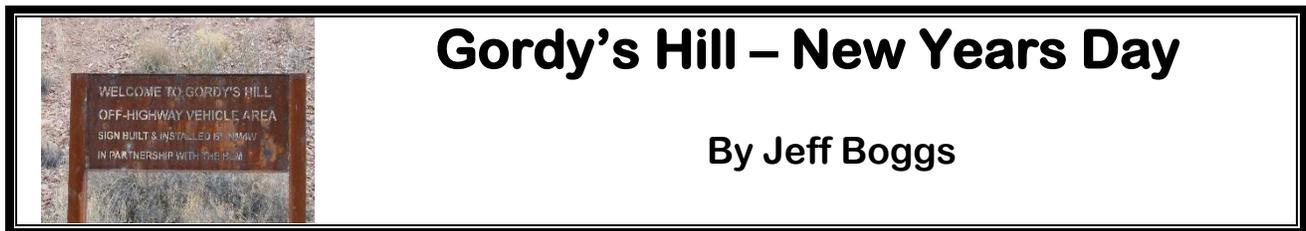
A Note on Trail Stewardship

Using low range appropriately helps protect our trails. Less wheel spin means less erosion, fewer bypasses, and a better experience for everyone who uses the land after us. Smooth, controlled driving is a cornerstone of responsible four-wheeling.

Final Thought

Low range is one of the most valuable tools your 4×4 has—but only if it's used correctly. If a section of trail requires slow, controlled movement, that's your cue. Engaging low range early is always better than reacting late.

When the terrain gets technical, steep, or slow—shift into low, stay in control, and keep your rig cool and healthy.



I led a moderate level group ride at Gordy's Hill area on New Year's Day 2026. Good cool weather, no dust.

We started from the Lemitar Truck Stop, with the other two groups. We drove up the Causeway road and through a short section of upper Amado to get to the road down to the Barite Mines. We stopped and explored one mine. Drove to the end of that road and turned around. Beautiful scenery!!

Back to the bottom of the big Causeway climb. Dan had some traction trouble, so Willie went up first, Jeff next, with straps attached to each bumper. Then we attached a strap to Dan's truck front bumper and in a slow but steady manner, we drove up to the top. The rest of the group used low range and lockers to get up.

Down Great Escape to the upper Amado canyon for lunch and a brief ceremony for Jeff Rector. Doug Story got a upper sidewall tear in one of his tires, so the spare went on the ground. Later that day Ian helped plug the leak and it seemed to hold air. New tires may be on Doug's list of upgrades for his sweet Tacoma !!!!

Our group left, going up the Great Escape and went back to the main road. We went to the road that leads around the northeast and north portions of the Gordy's Hill OHV area. Rugged and scenic, eventually dropping into the main arroyo back out to the sand hills and the original Gordy's Hill Sign.

We got some interesting UFO sightings. 2 Paragliders flew overhead. They were having a great time. Some dirt bikes were climbing the big sand hills and some of our group joined in on the sandy fun.

A great day, and some saw new areas for the first time. Thanks to Anthony and Allison for trail-gunning duties. Jeff Boggs , Trail Leader

Member Spotlight: Leroy Lints

By Frank Whiston



If you've crossed paths with Leroy Lints on the trail, you've likely noticed both his well-built Jeep and his thoughtful approach to wheeling. A Santa Fe local, Leroy began collecting points toward NM4W membership in June 2025 and was officially voted in as a full member just one month later — quickly finding his place within the club. For Leroy, off-roading isn't just a hobby; it's something deeply rooted in his upbringing. Growing up in the countryside and spending time around

Cerrillos, exploring came naturally. Annual camping trips to Coyote with family and friends and countless hours roaming the outdoors helped engrain a sense of adventure early on. After the passing of his father, Leroy found himself reconnecting with that adventurous spirit — this time through four-wheeling.

Leroy's current rig is a 2021 Jeep Wrangler Sahara High Altitude, and it carries both technical sophistication and personal meaning. Purchased used after a car accident, the Jeep became a fresh start and a long-term project. From the black leather interior with bronze stitching to a carefully researched and thoughtfully upgraded drivetrain, every modification reflects time, effort, and intention. Highlights include a 2.5" Metalcloak Game Changer lift, Method 703 bronze bead grip wheels, 4.56 Yukon gears, Eaton E-lockers front and rear, extensive Metalcloak armor and steering upgrades, KC lighting, and a Badland 12,000-pound winch — all built with capability in mind. Working on the Jeep has also been a way for Leroy to honor his father, having grown up learning in his dad's shop.

While Moab stands out as a favorite destination, Leroy says he truly loves wheeling in northern New Mexico, especially discovering trails closer to home. One of his favorite NM4W memories has been wheeling early on with fellow member Jonathan, who introduced him to local trails he hadn't known existed — a reminder of how the club fosters connection as much as exploration.

When asked about a dream destination, Leroy doesn't point to a single place. For him, it's about the challenge, the growth, and seeing where the journey leads. So far, he says, it's been nothing short of amazing.



Outside of wheeling, Leroy admits he doesn't have many other hobbies — but his background might surprise you. He spent 11 years working in kitchens, starting as a high school dishwasher and eventually learning professional baking and hot-line cooking. Along the way, he learned Spanish by working closely with Spanish-speaking coworkers and can comfortably hold a conversation today. Leroy's advice for new and prospective members is simple but powerful: *Don't give up. Make mistakes, ask questions, and learn from them.* He values the supportive nature of group rides, where you can challenge yourself knowing you won't be left behind. We're glad to have Leroy on the trail with NM4W and look forward to seeing where his journey — and his Jeep — take him next.



A photograph of a stone building, likely a ghost town structure, set in a desert landscape. The building has a simple, rectangular design with a small arched doorway and several windows. The surrounding area is arid and rocky.	<h2>Riley Ghost Town – Jan 3, 2025</h2>
	<p>By Jeff Boggs</p>

We met up at Kiva RV on I-25, early on Saturday. Aired down and drove the long smooth , DUSTY, dirt road to Riley NM area. We explored the roads and arroyos in this area. Cows, wild horses, a blue Jay, and a drone were seen in this area. A young bull did not like Doug or his Tacoma, and made a charge at his rig. We checked out several roads and saw some great views, up close at the Bear Mts. Sandstone and volcanic tuft makes up this area of New Mexico. Mary had some issues with her rig, so she went back and hung out where we would be finishing the ride, later in the day.

We had lunch at the old rock wall house. We spotted a herd of 9 wild horse on a ridge. We continued to explore in the afternoon. This ride is constant turns and hills, in low range. Drivers needed to watch the roads closely, as some had hidden washouts.

Back to where Mary was and we all drove to the ghost town of Riley , NM. We checked out the old schoolhouse, cemetery and the ruins there. Time to get back to I-25, but first the long DUSTY road that goes north of Ladron Peak.

Thanks to all who got out and enjoyed a nice day in New Mexico. Thanks for all who helped relay radio messages while we were driving, all spread out, on the dusty part of the ride. Pat and Linda were tail gunners and did a great job of closing some gates, and radio comm, thanks!

The Riley ride is one of my favorite club rides. Remote, scenic, and just fun to drive and explore this area. There will be future rides out there.



Jeep 2018+ JL or JT Issue

By Jeff Boggs

If you own a 2018 to present Jeep JL or a JT Gladiator 2020 to present, this article is for you.

Your coolant system has a plastic coolant recovery bottle, MOPAR 68283565AB. This tank is for antifreeze expansion when your motor is running. The antifreeze is hot and under pressure. Over time the plastic tank will become brittle and will leak at the middle seam and / or at the fitting connections. This can be a slight leak or a big crack. Either way, this can cause loss of coolant and rapid engine temperature raise.

When this leak can happen is undetermined by age and or milage. Probably out on the trail a long ways for the repair shop. You might can seal the leak with a JB weld plastic sealant, but this would have to setup for a while , before you could drive back to town. You will have to add antifreeze and or distilled water, to normal levels before driving your Jeep back to home.

What you can do:

- 1 Check this tank for dry antifreeze scales around the seams and connection areas, or active leaking, frequently.
- 2 Check coolant fluid levels before every ride.
- 3 Replace you old plastic coolant recovery bottle with a new Mopar plastic bottle every few years.
- 4 Replace the plastic bottle with an Aluminum aftermarket tank. This would be a more permanent fix.

I have looked online at Al+ replacement tanks. Lots of choices, and prices from \$40 -\$335. Do research on each one, as the cheaper ones have mixed reviews, and quality control issues.

I am replacing mine with Mishimoto Al+ tank. I see hairline cracks along the middle seam area, not leaking yet, but a ticking time bomb, in my 2021 JT Gladiator. My OEM plastic tank is now 5 years old!! Most expensive , but lifetime warranty. Some of the cheaper versions may work well, too.

But, currently on back order. They said they cannot keep up with the requests for this product for Jeep vehicles. Lots of JL and JT owners are going to AL+ replacement tanks.

If you decide to just use the Mopar plastic OEM tank, I have seen articles about these being on back order sometimes, also, They cost around \$65 , and should last a few years, I guess.

This issue can be found on other brands of 4x4's if they use the plastic coolant tank and a pressurized cap, instead of a pressurized cap on the radiator itself. If the radiator has a pressure cap, then overflow tank is passive and not under pressure. Check your rigs!!

This is an FYI article.

I encourage other 4x4 owners, in the club, to post up articles concerning any issues, modifications, and repairs that you have encountered, so we can all benefit, in keeping our wonderful exploration rigs in tip top condition.

Jeff Boggs



President Jack Dickey called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.
The meeting was held at North Domingo Baca Multi-Generational Center.
Jack thanked Janet Crosby for hosting the meeting and bringing the snacks.
Jack presented Matt Martel with the First Time Trail Leader medallion.

MEMBERS ATTENDING: Bruce Allen, Jeff Boggs, Glenn Boudreaux, Guy Conway, Janet Crosby, Mike Crosby, Cathy Dickey, Jack Dickey, Doug Elkins, Shirley Godfrey, Michael Hoffman, Ed Kausche, Lyn Kausche, Leroy Lints, Matt Martel, Allison Martinez, Jack Nutter, Oly Olson, Stefanie Olson, Snow Petersen, Lauri Rector, Jonathan Rivera, Christine Robson, Steve Robson, Douglas Story II, Mary Turpin, Anthony Weaver, Trish Weller, Frank Whiston, William Zobel

GUESTS ATTENDING: Doug Caddell, Tyler Gordon, Ralph Lied-Lopez, Paul Ortega, Catherine Pruitt, Gabriel Pruitt, Armando Sanchez

PRESIDENT – Jack Dickey

Jack asked the Club if they liked the past trip reports. The number of rides has increased and could take about 20 minutes or longer for just 10 rides a month. It was suggested to have the trip leaders fill out a form/template about the ride and have Don include the information in the newsletter.

A change has been made to the calendar. The trip leader will now email a guest a waiver to sign and return electronically.

Cathy will do the 50/50 at the end of the meeting.

VICE PRESIDENT’S REPORT – VP Jonathan Rivera

There have been fourteen new applicates since the last meeting. Having five points and in attendance, Armando Sanchez was voted in as a new member. A motion was made and approved by a majority of members present without discussion.

Johanthan went over this past month’s transgression fines.

Adding to the coffers this month –

Jeff Boggs - repeat offender leaving his coffee mug on the fender of a car.

Lauri Rector - backed into Jack Dickey’ vehicle.

Jonathan Rivera – missed a left hand turn and a couple of vehicles followed before turning around.

SECRETARY’S REPORT - Shirley Godfrey

Meeting minutes can be read in the Newsletter. - A motion was made and approved by a majority of members present without discussion.

TREASURER'S REPORT - Jack Dickey gave the report for Rich Steele

Current balances for checking, saving accounts, and Pay Pal were provided.

Diego Serna was reimbursed for \$278.94 for the meat provided at the Christmas party. The budget was approved to be \$300.00.

Next expense will be the renewal of the PO Box.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the treasurer's report. Motion was approved by a majority of members present without discussion.

TRIP CHAIRMAN'S REPORT –Mary Turpin

Mary went over past rides. Trip leaders/ride attendee gave a brief rundown of the ride.

Past Events and Trips

Past Events and Trips (10 since last meeting!)

- December 20, Gordy's - Moderate Play Day. Mary Turpin – Upper and Lower Amado. Did a little wrenching.
- December 22, Wanderlust Run, Mary Turpin – near Cuba. No set road.
- December 26, Winter Adventure in the Zunis, Snow Peterson – small group. Nice ride.
- December 27, Caja del Rio Plateau, Matt Martel – It was supposed to have been a dry dusty run that turned out to be muddy but there were a lot of cool looking sites.
- December 27 &28 NM Badge of Honor Trail – Amatista Ledges, Jonathan Rivera - Scenic rock crawling trail.
- January 1, New Year's Day Easy/Moderate #2, Frank Whiston – Amado, when East to West, waterfalls.
- January 1, New Year's Day Easy/Moderate, #1, Jeff Boggs – Amado, saw a few mines.
- January 1, New Year's Day Moderate/Hard #3, Mary Turpin – All three groups gathered in a small area for a short memorial for Jeff Rector.
- January 2, Chupadera Mountains, Willie Crawley - Beautiful wondering day in the desert.
- January 3, Riley Loop, Jeff Boggs - Washes and encountered a bull.

Upcoming Events and Trips

Five trips are on the calendar before our next meeting, refer to website for details. Contact trip leader if there are questions.

Jack Dickey – The Granite Canyon sign was placed on Upper Amado and will have to be moved to the correct location.

DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS REPORT - Bill Zobel

No new news to report.

HISTORIAN'S REPORT - Frank Whiston – Good job posting pictures. We now have drone videos being posted!!!

Jack mentioned there are over 23,000 pictures in the gallery if you want to see the ride areas.

WEBMASTER'S REPORT and NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S REPORT - Don Roy –

Don unable to make it due to the weather.

OLD BUSINESS: No old business.

NEW BUSINESS:

Gordy's grant funds – Of the \$20,000 grant money received, there is \$3,000.00 left. NMOHVA, who helped the Club receive the grant, would like NM4Wheelers use the remaining money on new directional signs that are placed on the main roadway. Jack and Frank are not in support on directional signs due to the amount of time, various State agencies involved, getting permission from private land owners to place the signs, and we only have a few months to spend the rest of the money. Frank would like to see a sign on the back of the Gordy's existing sign as a key explaining the trail ratings. When Frank discussed this with NMOHVA, they were not in favor of it. Jack and Frank will go to the next NMOHVA meeting on January 15th. The discussion was tabled until February.

Tank Trap, a Santa Fe National Forest rock crawling trail, FR 24NAA, has been closed since about 2012. The reasons at the time were – soil erosion, wild life, it being a cultural area. People are still using it illegally (NOT OUR CLUB). A committee was formed; Leroy Lintz, Mary Turpin, Jonathan Rivera, and Glenn Boudreaux will work towards exploring the possibility to reopen Tank Trap. It maybe possible to get a grant to pay experts to research if those reasons are valid today.

NM Off Road Expo is being held April 11th and 12th at the Dragstrip. The Club was contacted to participate receiving a free booth space somewhere in the pit area. The Club would need to provide tables, chairs, canopy and display items. HOWEVER, NM Off Road Expo requested an exciting display of rock crawling with demonstrations. Jack asked the members if the Club should have a booth. There was an anonymous vote of NO. The Club would have agreed to do the booth if it could have presented an education booth, i.e. safety, etc.

Going forward, Jack will post the meeting agenda on the website calendar.

50/50 raffle \$70.00. Winner Ed Kausche, \$35.00.

A motion was made to adjourn and seconded. Motion was approved by a majority of members present without discussion. Meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Keep PUBLIC lands open to the PUBLIC

NM4W Officers and Staff

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